

Media Information Letter

Updated: April 8, 2010

Dear Media Representative,

We are pleased to learn of your interest in embedding with a military unit of United States Forces-Iraq. The following information is provided to assist you in coordinating and preparing for your visit. Keep in mind if you are working directly with a unit or command within Iraq they may operate under different parameters.

Gaining an embed slot:

Reporters should e-mail initial requests to embed with United States Forces – Iraq military units through the USF-I embed coordination team at mnfi.mediaembed@iraq.centcom.mil. Once you e-mail the embed team, they will send you a packet of information that needs to be filled out prior to the mission. This packet is also found on the website <http://www.usf-iraq.com>. The completed packet will then be forwarded to the appropriate public affairs officer (PAO). Include as much information as possible in your initial request to ensure your request is matched up to the appropriate unit. Include the type of unit, area, mission/angle, timeframe, number in your crew, etc. Units have limited slots for embeds and each embed must be approved by the unit commander. Once approved the media embed unit will contact you. In your email conversations with the embedding unit PAO, please continue to courtesy copy (CC) the embed coordinator. This will facilitate travels throughout theater.

Do Not Travel Before You Are Approved For Your Embed!!! If you choose to travel you are taking the risk of coming to the country and not being embedded.

Prior to Travel:

Before traveling, reporters are responsible for the following:

-Vaccinations: You are responsible for your own vaccinations. We recommend you check the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website (go to www.cdc.gov; select “Health and Safety Topics” at the top, then select “travelers’ health” and then “Middle East”. You can also call the CDC information hotline at 1-800-232-4636. If you have additional questions please consult your physician.

-Blood type: You should know your blood type; it will be required information for certain kinds of military transportation.

-HIV Test: The government of Iraq has recently re-instituted a provision stating that anybody traveling to Iraq who plans on being there for 10 days or longer needs to have an HIV test done and documented prior to leaving the country. If you fly MILAIR in or out, this will not be a problem. If you fly commercial, this will be an issue you need to resolve prior to coming to Iraq.

-Physical Fitness: If, in the opinion of the unit commander, a media representative is unable to withstand the rigorous conditions required to operate with the forward deployed forces, the commander or his/her representative may limit the representative’s participation with operational forces to ensure unit safety.

-Required and optional items to bring: See the checklist at the end of this information.

We recommend you check with the command that you are embedding with for more specific information. Some locations have sparse accommodations. No matter what unit you embed with, you will need body armor and a helmet, ballistic eye protection, sturdy closed toed shoes and long sleeves to travel on any military mode of transport. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE IT, YOU WILL NOT BE

ALLOWED TO TRAVEL OR EMBED with the military. Please refer to the checklist for more information about body armor.

Travel to Iraq:

You are responsible for your own transportation to Kuwait. Transportation from Kuwait to the area of your embed is coordinated by the military.

-Kuwait:

When you travel to Kuwait, you will be provided transportation from Kuwait City International Airport to Ali Al Salem Airbase. Once approved for your embed, you will receive detailed instructions about how to proceed through this area. Additional paperwork may be required for you to process through Kuwait. A delay in returning the required documents could prevent you being allowed access to US military facilities.

-Military Side of Baghdad International Airport:

When you arrive in Baghdad you will be shuttled from the airfield to **Camp Stryker** where you may take the military shuttle (called the Rhino) to the International Zone. The Rhino runs from Camp Stryker only once each night and times vary due to operational security, so your arrival must be closely coordinated. If the Rhino is not running, you will need to ask about taking a helicopter from BIAP to LZ Washington in the International Zone. The transportation desk in the PAX terminal at BIAP can provide you additional information. If you travel commercially to Baghdad International Airport you will **NOT BE** provided military transportation from the commercial side of the airport to the military side. You must coordinate your own transportation to and from commercial BIAP with a local personal security company or local bureau. Military transportation will be available once you enter the International Zone, through the CPIC Escort office, or once you enter Camp Victory, through coordination with the USF-I Public Affairs Media Relations Office.

-Transportation in Iraq:

Will be coordinated for you through the Media Embed section and the receiving unit.

-VISA Requirement:

Before you travel, contact your embassy to find out what visa requirements are necessary for entry into Kuwait and/or Baghdad. Times may vary in getting an approved visa depending on what country a traveler is from. If you travel to Iraq as unilateral media, i.e., not embedded with the military, or you disembed at any time, it is the responsibility of your **news organization** to organize your entry and exit documentation with the Iraqi Embassy.

-Accreditation: All reporters must sign appropriate paperwork prior to being embedded with USF-I units. Media embedding with a unit upon arrival in Iraq who plan to remain with that unit may, at the discretion of the embedding unit PA, sign the appropriate paperwork upon arrival at the unit (such an arrangement must be pre-coordinated among the reporter, the embed PA, and the CPIC). However, keep in mind that the only official credentialing for Iraq must be done at the CPIC.

For credentialing you will need to bring and provide the following:

- A valid form of government issued picture identification (i.e., a passport).
- A valid form of press/employee picture identification issued by a legitimate media source.
- A typed and signed letter printed on company letterhead from a legitimate media source stating that you are currently employed and requesting that media credentials are issued. (See the example letter is sent via e-mail and also available on the USF-Iraq website).

-Key points of contact:

- USF-I Embed Coordinator: USF-I.mediembed@iraq.centcom.mil.
- For accreditation questions: pressid@baghdadforum.com
- Media Operations Center (for media queries): usfipressdesk@iraq.centcom.mil

-Ground Rules: For the safety and security of U.S. Forces and embedded media, media will adhere to established ground rules. Ground rules will be agreed to in advance and signed by media prior to embedding. Violation of the ground rules may result in the immediate termination of your embed and removal from theater.

Ten Commandments of Preventing Heat Injury

1. Drink adequate fluids in small quantities (5 to 7 ounces) every 15 to 20 minutes. Thirst is not an adequate indicator of dehydration. Alcohol, coffee, soft drinks, and sports drinks aren't good substitutes for water. Do not use salt tablets. Drink water even when you're not thirsty.
2. Be prepared for a change in climate once you arrive in the Iraq. Do your best to prepare accordingly. Being physically fit can help with this process. On average it takes a week to acclimate. For some people it can take longer.
3. Schedule work/rest periods. Schedule heavy work for the cooler part of the day, morning or late afternoon. The body generates more heat when heavy work is being performed.
4. Avoid overexertion.
5. Use shaded areas: trees, buildings, tents to reduce radiant heating. The temperature in the sun and under the canopy of a tree can vary from 8° to 20°F.
6. Use of sun screens to protect exposed skin.
7. Wear loose-fitting, light-weight, light-colored clothing. Do not layer clothing; more clothing increases the risk of heat injury.
8. Understand heat injuries and their symptoms. Some of these injuries include: Sunburn, heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. You can find additional information about heat injuries at: <http://www.hooah4health.com/deployment/heat/default.htm>
9. Make sure you eat all meals even if not hungry to ensure adequate nutrients are maintained.
10. Using misting sprays is a good idea to keep the body cool.

EMBED CHECKLIST

As an embedded journalist, you **must** provide:

1. Hygiene items
 - Soap/shampoo
 - Toothbrush/toothpaste
 - Shower shoes
 - Towels
 - Feminine hygiene products
 - Toilet paper (optional for when you are away from the compound)
 - Baby wipes (optional)
2. Sleeping Bag
3. Waterproof sunscreen
4. Flashlights (include red lenses)
5. Climate appropriate clothing – Mid Oct-Mid May nights are cooling down and it gets very cold in the desert. By the end of NOV temps can drop to below 30 degrees Fahrenheit and vary by 50 degrees during the day. Dress in layers and pack a rain- resistant shell or jacket during this time frame. In the summer months the heat is extreme. Bring light, loose clothing and a hat for protection from the sun when not wearing your protective gear.
6. Phone (optional)
7. Equipment needed for filing/transmitting media products
8. Hand carry all prescription medication and a full supply to last throughout your embed.
9. Bug repellent (with Deet)
10. Cash and/or Debit Card (PX accepts debit/credit cards but card system may not always be functioning)
11. Ballistic Equipment (protective vest* & helmet) (LEVEL IV recommended), ballistic eye protection, long sleeves required for transportation on military aircraft.
 1. Listed below is a website that you can use to order you body armor, vest and helmet, but please be aware that this is not the only source you can purchase them from.
 2. \$1080 Interceptor Outer Tactical Vest
http://www.bulletproofme.com/Body_Armor_Complete_Products_LIST.shtml
 3. \$490-515 MICH Kevlar® Helmet
http://www.bulletproofme.com/Body_Armor_Complete_Products_LIST.shtml

While embedded the receiving unit will provide:

1. Food
2. Shelter
3. Cot (unless in the field)
4. Medical attention (if needed)

* Level IV is currently the highest level of protection offered for body armor. It is not mandatory to have level IV but it is strongly recommended. Body armor should include shoulder and neck protection as part of the system. **If you show up without protective equipment, you will not be allowed to embed.**